

State Rehabilitation Council

Executive Meeting

Office of Rehabilitation Services

March 2, 2005

Minutes

Present from State Rehabilitation Council: William Anderson, Joseph Ferreira, J. David Sienko

Present from Agency staff: Stephen Brunero, Raymond Carroll, Gary Wier

1. Call to Order: The meeting came to order at 4:15 PM.

B. Anderson: Informed the members that R. Scribner had resigned his position on the Council due to relocation of work. Her letter of resignation will be sent to the Governor's office by staff. This leaves the Council without a Secretary, and this will be discussed at the March 7th meeting.

Sub-committee structure: There will be a short meeting of all Sub-committees to elect a Vice-chair and set their schedules for 2005. This information will be directed to staff for notation in the Council minutes.

2. The Agenda for the March 7, 2005 meeting

Old Business:

- Additions or deletions to agenda**
- Review and approval of Minutes from January 10, 2005**
- By-laws Committee – Craig Enos**

Review the Governor's Advisory opinion and examine the SRC By-Laws for compliance or need for amendment in language.

- Handicap Parking Spaces cuts for Providence**

New Business:

- Legislative Issues**
- Status of Subcommittees - Rethinking subcommittee structure: a discussion regarding the Quality Assurance, Employment, and State Plan & Policy Committees functions in relation to the work of Council.**

ORS Directors Report – Raymond Carroll

Chairperson's Report – B. Anderson

- Federal Budgetary Eliminations - Authorization from Council for the Chair to be able to respond to time sensitive issues related to reduction in Funding of Program Services based on Federal Budgetary eliminations. (Information provided by ORS staff).**
- SRC - Annual Report Status and Discussion/Pictures of Members**

- **SRC representative on the Rhodes to Independence Steering Committee**

3. Annual Report Discussion

B. Anderson: Stated he will have a draft for the March 7th meeting of his remarks for the SRC Annual Report. He will get it out to N. Baker by the end of the week. "In order to keep the costs down this year we need to keep this to a minimum."

R. Carroll: Noted that he had reviewed the subcommittee reports with Sharon, who has been working with N. Baker on formatting the overall report, and the committee reports seemed brief. "For the Agency it is good practice to put some data in as to how we did. Perhaps this could be added. S. DiPinto can work with the Council to add ORS figures and charts and the chairs of subcommittees could add more information if that is what the Council wants to do."

B. Anderson: Agreed and said that sounded like a plan. "There is concern with the way it was done last year and what has come in this year; people went from bulleted items to two paragraphs with three lines each. The question is do we want this or do we change the reports. I do not know if committee chairs are giving us license to edit their reports. We can bring this up at the meeting and ask if

anyone wishes to add anything to the reports."

D. Sienko: "The employment committee has already added more information. The other committees could as well. We can do this through a format approach; explaining that we have gotten a first look at the reports and it would be nice if each subcommittee had a page. That way each subcommittee will have the opportunity to add more information."

B. Anderson: "I agree, I am willing to give ORS more latitude in this as long as it does not slow things down or cost more."

R. Carroll: "We want the report to be current, comprehensive and well presented."

4. A letter from Dr. Mimless - The Director of Rhode Island Psychiatric Services

B. Anderson: Read a letter that had just come in from Dr. Mimless, and he is asking for assistance to remedy obstacles that prevent people from obtaining quality, timely, affordable, and comprehensive mental health treatment.

Excerpt from letter – "The fundamental mission of the Rhode Island Psychiatric Services (RIPS), is to provide psychiatric and substance abuse services to individuals in need of services but who are unable

to access help from the current mental health system. No one in need will be turned down. A primary sample of our target population will be un-insured individuals, racial and ethnic minorities, recently released from incarceration, substance abuse (dual diagnosed), veterans unable to qualify for VA benefits, those in transition with their Social Security benefits, and primary physician referrals." The letter was given to ORS.

S. Brunero: "This is a good resource. It certainly targets the populations that are in need of these services. We have a CRP person who can probably contact him."

R. Carroll: "One of the Governor's new initiatives is a prison reentry program and ORS has new relationship with the veterans. Some of these groups this letter refers to, we are working with so we will follow this up."

D. Sienko: "I am on the Prison Reentry Taskforce for education and we just did a needs assessment; it is clear that the numbers of available beds or facilities for incarcerated individuals coming out, needing treatment, are not enough."

5. RSA Training

R. Carroll: "S. Brunero, N. Baker and I attended this recent regional steering committee for the training and I believe the SRC is going to

find this training session very helpful. There is a Power Point presentation on CD, in which I was involved crafting, that as a baseline for information will be an excellent toll for training. It talks about the history of Rehabilitation Services, the formulation of SRCs, the principles of the program, and the functions and responsibilities. And it does it in an interesting and understandable way. This will be available back here after the training so that when we have new members coming onto the Council, or even for older members on the Council, it will be a marvelous toll to refresh them on the program. More importantly, May 18-19th, we need to have three to five (3-5) volunteers to attend."

Here are the top six (6) priorities from the Rhode Island SRC returned surveys.

These will be added to the rest of the region's responses and the top six issues will be addressed in panel discussions on the first day of training.

- 1. Effective Organization/Operational Strategies (Encompassing subcommittee responsibilities/strategies, this being very high as a priority)**
- 2. Leadership Development**
- 3. New Member Recruitment**
- 4. Coordinate Activities with Other Councils and Boards**
- 5. Internal/External Advocacy**
- 6. New Member Orientation**

Second day of training

*** Regional Customization - The second day of training will be geared to the New England region, stressing items that are presented by the SRC's as on-going concerns for this region. There will be a conference call to determine what specific issues the regional customization training should address.**

March 23, 2005

5th floor small conference room/ORS

10 am. Lasting approximately 1 Hour.

Implications of the Needs assessment, and which SRC members we want to cultivate for these groups. (Regard last question on survey – see below)

Anyone interested in sending responses to the question below, please do so at least two days before this teleconference. Send responses to N. Baker or S. Brunero. Anyone interested in attending the teleconference please let S. Brunero know, ASAP.

Q: Potential Issues to address in “Building Effective Partnerships:

Purpose, Process, and Payoff” (Day Two)

The objectives of this aspect of the forum are to:

- Affirm the SRC’s advocacy role to ensure that the VR program is consumer oriented and customer driven**
- Strengthen understanding of the SRC/VR agency partnership to support the achievement of mutually agreed upon outcomes**
- Increase the capacity of SRC members to individually and collectively fulfill their role as partners with the state agency to continually improve the VR program to better meet the rehabilitation needs of consumers**

In that regard, what specific issues should the forum address in order to facilitate the SRC’s fulfillment of the above objectives or other SRC functions?

J. Ferreira: "I have been giving this training a lot of thought and I would like to attend. I realize that it will be benifitial to me and the entire Council."

B. Anderson: "I think that is a very good idea for you to attend. As I mentioned to the Council at the last meeting, it really should be people who are going to be on this Council for a few more years."

That makes two members thus far; D. Di Orio and J. Ferreira. At the meeting we will let everyone know again and see if we can get at least one more member to attend the May training."

R. Carroll: Informed the committee that all expenses will be paid; that money has been dedicated for food, lodging, and training. He asked if N. Baker was going to attend?

B. Anderson: "I think she should go."

The RSA needs to know who is coming to the May training at least five (5) weeks before. Let B. Anderson know by April 1th.

6. Subcommittee Status

· Legislative

D. Sienko: "Since P. Choquette left we have no one to chair the Legislative committee however, communication has really come along electronically. We now get the Legislative News Letter electronically, and it is more 'real time'. Could the Legislative committee become ad hock, as part of the Executive committee, during the legislative session? It would become an agenda item at the Executive committee meetings, during the sessions. The Executive committee could review what is in the legislation, which may have some impact, and forward it to the Full Council for

discussion."

B. Anderson: "I think that is a great idea because there is a lot of information that we all get from the Legislative News Letter." He noted for N. Baker to highlight the following; "As a matter of practice everyone who becomes a member of the Council gets this letter. Members should read through the letter. If there are any particular items a member wants the Council to address and then respond to, bring those items to the attention of a member on the Executive committee. They can discuss it at the Executive committee meetings, and or bring it up at the Council meetings. Because even if we continued with the Legislative committee, they cannot act on their own, they would still have to bring it to the Full Council. We will incorporate this in our discussion and have it as a standing part of the Executive committee and Full Council meeting agendas. "

· By-Laws

It was determined that the By-Laws committee will continue to deal with issues as they come up. They are an ad hock committee working when there is a need to change something in the By-Laws, at the Council discretion. There will be no change with this committee.

· Nominating & Leadership Development

It was determined that this committee is an active, fluid committee. It

has active members and it is operating well. They are busy at certain times of the year. Additionally they are starting to work with training issues, which is what we wanted, so it is more of an ongoing functional committee.

- State Plan and Policy

This is a working committee, a work in progress. They have lost R. Scribner, she was the Vice-chair, so a larger burden falls a fewer members.

J. Ferreira: "I do not understand the legal language, and am concerned about the future; what happens when B. Anderson and C. Enos leave?"

R. Carroll: "We do strive for readability and understandability to balance the legal perspective, yet so an individual person can understand it."

J. Ferreira: "I do understand, it is readable but when it comes to the legal changes and deletions, the revisions, it is difficult." He asked B. Anderson how many hours he spends reading the Policies revisions.

B. Anderson: "I spend a lot of time on it. If we need to open this up to more people on the Council, looking towards the future, that is fine, we will open this up at the meeting to see if anyone wants to join this

committee. Right now we have five (5), and that is enough."

R. Carroll: "These are the types of roundtable discussions you might want to have at the TSA training. Certainly other SRC's have these same issues to deal with and sharing this information will lead to solutions."

- Employment**

There is good participation at the meetings. There are actions and they have a work plan. It is a working committee, with some actions already being accomplished and others are in progress.

D. Sienko: "It seems to me that it is working as a sounding board for ORS to develop strategies."

- Quality Assurance**

B. Anderson: "This is an important committee and they are not doing much of anything. This is a critical committee and we do not even have a chair for it. We are going to have to focus on this committee at the next Full Council meeting."

J. Ferreira: Asked if it would be possible to incorporate committees?

B. Anderson: "That is something we will have to talk about at this

next meeting. We might want to incorporate the Employment and Quality Assurance, since we already have overlap of members."

R. Carroll: remarked that streamlining and consolidation has worked in the past.

B. Anderson: "As practice, the subcommittees have been a function of the chair's determination as to what the Council should be doing. You would think that one of the biggest concerns people might have would be how the consumers feel about ORS's services. Yet, this committee is stagnant, no one is volunteering for it."

D. Sienko: "Consolidation is a good point. If we look at Employment, Quality Assurance, the standards and indicators, which the Agency is responsible for, I would expect just like in the Department of Education where we would want to share that with the public. It should be the same thing here. When ORS presents their reports on the quality indicators, performance reports, and shares that with the Council, it is to create that relationship between the advisors and the Agency. If we look at the four (4) standing committees; Nomination & Leadership, State Plan & Policy, Employment, and Quality Assurance, the three (3) that impact the relationship between the Council and the Agency are State Plan & Policy, Employment, and Quality Assurance. Is there an opportunity for a discussion around the functions of these committees, is it really more homogeneous in that sense, more one function for these three (3) subcommittees."

B. Anderson: "There are a number of committees that are meeting and doing their work, but it seems to be in a vacuum. Additionally, a critical committee that needs to be doing work is not part of the process, and we need to get it back into the function of the Council. This might be an opportunity, as D. Sienko has said, to change the functions and structure of the subcommittees."

D. Sienko: "We have agreement that By-Laws is an ad hoc committee and Legislation will actually be an agenda item. If we had a piece of legislation that two (2) or three (3) members of the Council had an interest in, we could create an ad hoc committee to do that. The members interested would get a motion to investigate it and report it back to the Council. "

B. Anderson: "If the Council felt it was important then yes."

R. Carroll: "In my report to the Council on Monday we have some National issues that will require your consideration. Two (2) that are going on, the President's 2006 budget, and the Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WEA), of which the Rehabilitation Act is under. What the House committee wanted to do was to Block Grant a number of programs, including the VR Program. There is an advocacy effort in the community, letters have gone to the Congressional Delegations, but the Council needs to be aware of this."

"An example of how these budgets changes will impact VR; this week we are having this Federal on-site visit this week, but the President's Budget, organizationally, is dissolving the regional RSA offices. In terms of the perspective of the Program, it is crumbling the infrastructure and identity. It would be great if the Council took some active action to address this Federally. The SRC can weigh in."

B. Anderson: "They are dong away with the regional offices?"

R. Carroll: "There are ten (10) regional offices. The President's Budget has eliminated sixty six (66) FTD, which are the number of staff that work in the regional offices. There is an effort underway to close the Boston and New York offices in the Northeast, and move some people to Washington."

B. Anderson: "This means that everything is going to come out of Washington?"

R. Carroll: "Exactly. We all know the incredible budget deficit and the President's 2006 Budget is eliminating a lot of programs; Projects With Industries, Supported Employment, are a few. The SRC needs to be advised of this. The public policy and priorities are very frustrating. The atmosphere seems to be in Washington that some of these things might pass."

"I will have a fact sheets for the SRC meeting. Block Granting, in essence, lets the Governor in each state use the money at their discretion. VR money could be applied to as example, the One Stops, for infrastructure costs. VR could lose its protection under the law that we have now. All this is play and at risk right now. This is the philosophy of government. We already know that the bill HR27, has an amendment that will not be apposed, which is going to consolidate, TANA, Food Stamps, VR, Adult Education, and a host of programs, into a Block Grant."

G. Wier: "Right now something similar in each state exists for VR services, if this passes, agencies will have varying. They will be very different."

J. Ferreira: "It is a threat to disabled people. This is very frustrating, and we are taking steps backwards. It starts at the top and trickles down."

B. Anderson: "It is, and the argument they use will be they are going to cut all that administrative top-weight, which people want to hear. They will say it will not have any impact on the program, now. The reality is, are you going to call Washington for some problem in Cranston? And if we do, will anything get done? So it will impact everything. They will try to get away with this. The language will look good but underneath it is a blow to those who are disabled."

D. Sienko: "The issue we should address to the Council is we are giving the chair authority to respond to legislative or policy issues that may come up over the next couple of months, related to this, that need immediate response. "

N. Baker: "I want to clarify this for the agenda. This will be a discussion asking the Council to authorize the Chair to respond to time sensitive issues related to reduction in Funding of Program Services based on Federal Budgetary eliminations. (Information provided by ORS staff).

The executive members confirmed the agenda this item.

7. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Baker, Staff

State Rehabilitation Council